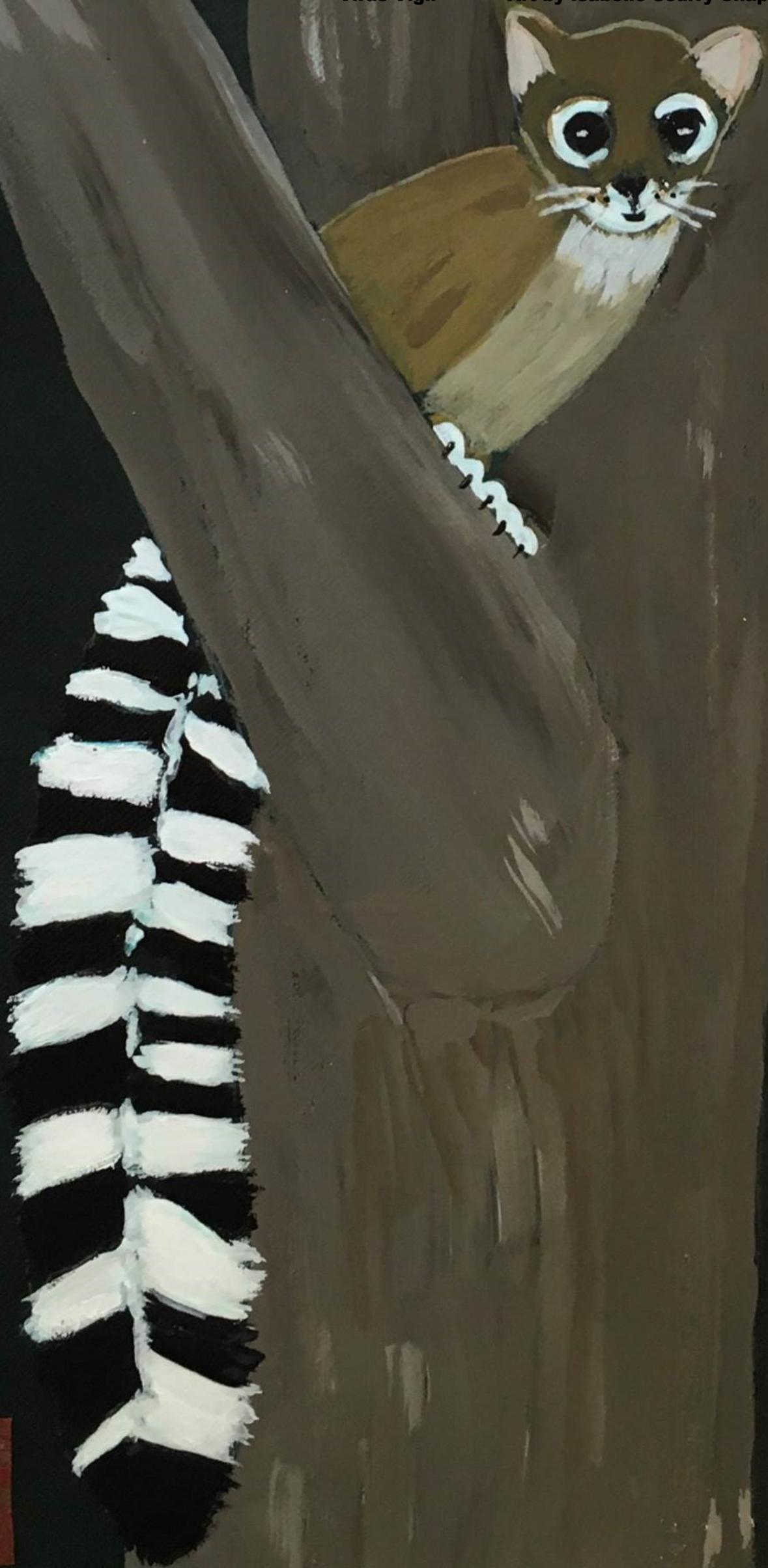


Virus Vigil

Poetry by Jim Blackburn
Art by Isabelle Scurry Chapman



Ringtail

Walking on the asphalt in Wimberley today,
Are any Earth Church members heading my way?
I hear the scrub jay announcing it's here,
And I just came upon a small herd of deer.

I look down at the road, and there is a pile
Of waste-looking material appearing a bit vile,
I quickly realize that we call this stuff scat,
And I do believe it's from the ringtail cat.

Now actually, the ringtail's not really a cat,
But regardless, it looks like an aristocrat,
A member of the family called raccoon
That only comes out at night like the moon.

This nocturnal animal looks really neat,
I'm sure that to see it would be a treat,
But in all my days of Hill Country fun,
I've never seen this son of a gun.

The ringtail's ears can go different directions,
And its white eye rings enhance light reflections,
And it really blends in with the countryside,
And when daylight comes, it prefers to hide.

It's interesting to share space but never see,
The other living thing – a real entity,
That has its own pace and habits and style,
We are living together but apart all the while.

It's interesting sharing night and day,
And staying out of each other's way,
Earth Church has rhythms that make sense,

And eliminates the need for recompense.

I like the idea that the ringtail and I,
Are linked together like the moon and sky,
But I'll have to be satisfied seeing scat,
For I don't think I'll see this ringtail cat.

So welcome to Earth Church
Pull yourself up a pew
Say a prayer that the ringtail
Might appear to you.